BEARING FRUIT

Dag Heward-Mills

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Preface

I have always wanted to be useful to the Lord. Many years ago, I prayed a prayer from the bottom of my heart, and asked the Lord to make me fruitful. I am very grateful to the Lord for saving my life. If it had not been for the Lord, I cannot imagine where I would be.It is out of gratitude to the Lord that I desire to be fruitful. I think that this should be the desire of every sincere Christian. But bearing fruit is not as simple as it seems.In this book, I begin to share some vital truths about how God wants you to be fruitful.What are God's expectations of me? God wants me to bear fruit after my own kind. There is nothing more difficult than trying to do something the wrong way. I have come to see that no matter how hard and how long you keep doing the wrong things, it still does not get you anywhere. Come with me on this journey as I share this important message about why you should bear fruit after your own kind.

Introduction

My father was a prominent lawyer and politician. He also owned a number of racehorses and a hotel. So you see, he was more or less regarded as a “big” man in society.When I became born again, I would often speak at length to him about Christ. But the more I tried, the more I failed. In fact, as a young raw student, I realized I was nowhere near his calibre, not to mention the age difference of about thirty years.So he said to me, “Listen, son, if you want me to receive your message, you better go get a doctorate in Theology from Trinity College (a Bible College), then come again.”And that was that. When my father spoke, it was final.I do not recall seeing any born-again Christians who were politicians and lawyers ever speak to him about Jesus. However, when those of his colleagues who were Freemasons came after him, he accepted their message and became a Freemason.It was not until the Lord showed me some Scriptures in the Bible, that I understood why my father had not been able to receive the Gospel from me.

> *And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, [mark those words] cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind...and God saw that it was good.*
>
> *Genesis 1: 24,25*

The Word of God teaches us here that every living thing is

supposed to bring forth after its kind. This means that you are expected to give birth to something which is just like yourself. Why is this the case? Because that is the natural order God has set on the earth! So if you are a frog, God expects you to give birth to frogs, and not to apes.I believe that is the reason why I failed to influence my father. Even nature shows that it is almost impossible to bring forth something that is not like yourself.You see, the best person to minister to you is someone of your own kind. We all differ in many respects. We are not the same. You may come from a certain background or speak a different language. But God can use you to minister to your kind, because you are the one who can easily relate to that particular category of people.Women are good at ministering to women, and elderly men find it easier to relate to other elderly people. Such people are more likely to succeed in putting across their ideas, because they are on level ground.Usually, it is only another businessman who can handle the objections of a stubborn businessman and tell him, “Are both of us not businessmen? And what do you have that I do not? I am also a very busy person, but I tell you, it is time to make Jesus your Lord and Saviour.”Or a student could tell his mates, “Hey look, are we not in the same class? Remember that I also have exams to write, but I still find time to worship the Lord and get distinctions. Jesus is coming soon, man. Don’t be left out.”Are you a banker, a secretary or a farmer? Whatever kind of person you are, you have the ability to positively influence the people of your kind. If you are a businessman, then reach out with the Gospel to other businessmen, because you are best at bringing forth your own kind. The same goes for market women, mechanics, rich men, etc.There are people who will only respond to someone they have something in common with: age group, profession, language, social class, etc. That is why the churches in

Ghana are pastored by Ghanaians, and not by the British or the Swiss - because a local pastor finds it easier to relate to his own people.Now, what does it mean to bring forth?

> *...for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.*
>
> *I Corinthians 4:15*

Paul is saying here, "By leading you to Christ through the Gospel, I have given birth to you spiritually. Through my activities, I have caused you to exist in Christ."Do you realize that we're existing because of the activities of our parents? Now, through your Christian activities, other Christians who are just like you will be born into God's Kingdom.Take for example, the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International. You will notice that most of their members are professionals in their forties and fifties. Their converts are also people in that age group. One reason why they are still thriving, is their application of God's principle of bringing forth after their own kind. They reach out to people who are just like them.Have you noticed that even beasts bring forth their own kind? That's how animals multiply. And that is how churches grow. When we stop reproducing after our kind, our numbers decrease and we begin to die out.I can say that I am bringing forth a lot of doctors like myself, who are becoming pastors. In our church today, there are many of such people. These are my spiritual children, having been born due to my personal outreach towards my type. As a result, I am not the only person of my kind in the church. There are others just like me.Today, millions of Christians carry on through life looking and praying for material things. We are not concerned about the Lord's commandment to bear fruit spiritually. So we walk through life like trees without

fruits. Like women who are unable to bear children, we have nothing to show for our Christianity.But children are so important that people are not likely to marry if they realise they will not be able to have them. Even loving husbands and wives are likely to seek other partners if they realize their union cannot produce children.In Africa, it is generally considered a disgrace for women to be childless. It is a known fact that some desperate women have extramarital affairs, and pretend the pregnancy was caused by their sterile husbands (until the baby is born with Chinese eyes, everybody believes it)!As you can see, being childless seems to be a big problem in our society. But God looks down from Heaven and sees that there is a far more serious problem than that: The problem of not having spiritual children!

Reasons Why You Should Bear Fruit

1. The first reason why you must bear fruit, is to show that you are truly born again.

Oh, I know that you pray aloud and sing the praise songs like everybody else. Some of you are the best dancers and so on.But I have come to realize that all church members are not necessarily Christians.It is unfortunate, but many who go to church are not born again, and do not even know God.Some years ago we had a patient in the gynaecology department of the Korle-Bu Hospital, where I was working. This woman was in her early twenties, but had never been able to have her period. Now, as a doctor I knew that this was abnormal. When she was medically investigated and examined, we discovered that this "woman" was really a man! We found "her" to have male reproductive organs. This explained why "she" was unable to have her period.So in spite of what "she" looked like on the outside, "she" could never bear children. "She" was not real—"she" was a "he"!That is why some people cannot bear fruit— because they are not real Christians. They are not genuine. They are like some shops in town which are supposed to be boutiques and spare parts shops. Yet they never seem to be open for business. Each day they claim to be "taking stock", but that is only a front for the cocaine business going on behind the scenes. Be careful, some people are not really what they claim to be.So, how can I tell whether you are a real Christian or not? Well, that is very simple:

> *Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*

We can distinguish genuine Christians from counterfeit Christians by looking at their fruit! I can tell, when I see you bringing forth other believers like yourself to the Lord. (Other students, businessmen, housewives, or whatever).If, by your spiritual activity, others just like you are brought to the Lord and discipled, then this fruit you are bearing shows you are for real!But if you have no converts to show for your Christianity, then there must be something missing. You are not genuine. You are just an attendee.It is no wonder some so-called Christians are not even interested in the Bible or the things of God. (Their only response to the pastor's sermon is one big yawn)!Today, many people come to church for reasons other than a deep desire to seek God.Others just follow a family member or a friend into the church. That is why some people fall away when certain things happen–because they are really not what they claim to be.For this reason, I keep telling the youth in our church, "If anyone wants to marry you, look at their fruits, and not their pretty faces or sweet 'raps'. By their fruits ye shall know them."In a large church like ours, there are all sorts of beasts mingling with God's genuine flock of sheep. These are wolves in sheep's clothing because when we talk about witnessing, they cannot even bear witness for Christ.Let me tell you this, that if something good has really happened to change your life, you will joyfully go about telling others. No one will have to urge you on. It just happens naturally.Dear friend, if the only Christianity you practise is by going to church on Sundays, then I am afraid to inform you that there is more to it than that (in fact, unbelievers attend church on Sundays too)! Real Christianity takes place OUTSIDE the church AFTER Sundays. Each weekday must have its share of prayer, worship, Bible reading and labouring for the Lord. So if you have

always comforted yourself with the fact that you go to church on Sundays, then I am afraid I must discomfort you!Church membership does not prove you are a genuine Christian at all! Here is some sound advice from II Corinthians 13:5: “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.”Friend, be for real. First, be born again. Then show by your fruit that you are a real, committed Christian.

2. To prove that you are healthy.

The second reason why some Christians do not bear fruit is because they are not healthy. They are not normal, productive Christians, because there is a spiritual sickness somewhere. Sometimes when a woman (a real one) is unable to give birth, it is due to an illness—like infertility. And some causes of infertility are the blocking of the fallopian tubes, inability of the ovaries to release eggs, destruction of the womb due to an earlier abortion and so on. All these are health reasons, which prevent childbirth.In the same way, when Christians are unable to give birth and be fruitful, it is often because there is a disease in their Christian life. Though they are born again, they are spiritually sick. One such sickness is laziness (some people are simply too lazy to labour for the Lord)! Another is pride. However, the main reason why a lot of Christians are not productive is because they are living in sin. Indeed, nothing affects fruitful Christian living like sin does.During his days as a hotel manager, one of my associates recalls seeing a Christian girl who came to sleep with a male lodger at this hotel. After they were through with whatever they were doing (your guess is as good as mine), this young lady just came out of the hotel room shouting in tongues! What a shame! Really, it is unfortunate. But there are many more like her, who indulge in immorality of every kind, and this kills their ability to witness.I mean, how can you, after

doing what you just did, speak to him to give his life to Jesus?Some people have such bad, un-Christian habits that they cannot even muster the courage to share the Gospel. It is all a question of character. I remember a certain charismatic Christian who smoked so much that it became a problem in his office. Everybody complained about it, including his boss.Now, if somebody like this tried to preach to others, nobody would take him seriously. He probably would not even try, anyway! People like these are spiritually sick, so they cannot bring forth any fruit—just like barren women.The Bible instructs us in 2 Peter 1:5-8 to add several things to our faith: "...add to our faith,virtue...knowledge...temperance...patience... godliness...brotherly kindness...charity."(But I thought it was enough for Christians just to remain in the Faith? What do we need all these extras for?)For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful.If these things be in you...they make you...! Notice here that Peter lists a number of qualities which immunize us from becoming barren and unfruitful in the things of God.That is why some Christians are unfruitful— because they have not added these godly attributes to their faith.The cancer of sin has made them unhealthy Christians. Unhealthy people everywhere are not productive.

3. To show that you have overcome the chokers of the Word.

> *And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.*
>
> *Mark 4:19*

My dictionary gives the meaning of the verb "to choke" as: "to

block, or obstruct a passage or process".That is exactly what happens to some Christians. They become so occupied with other things that they no longer have time for the things of God. Read the text again, and notice that even the normal, everyday cares of life can retard your spiritual progress.The demands of your job, for example, or the pressures of academic work, or the challenges of bringing up little children can make you unfaithful. Unfortunately, many Christians allow the blessing of marriage to choke the Word, and they end up no longer being useful to God. "But Pastor, I'm pregnant now and..."Look, as a doctor I can tell you that pregnancy is not a disease. In fact, some Christians are so mindful of the cares of this world, that all they have to offer are excuses:"But Pastor, my children...my school...my business..."What about the Lord's work? Really, if you are too busy to be involved in winning souls, then you are simply too busy!As God blesses and promotes us in this world, He does not intend that it should keep us from doing His work. We must rather overcome these potential chokers and continue being fruitful in His vineyard.Oh, I am looking forward to the day when the church's regular drummer will still be playing the drums, though he would have become the Minister for Foreign Affairs; when women will rise up to be pastors, despite the fact that they have to raise four kids at home; when ushers will still be at it, even when they have become multimillionaires. When the cares of this world will not choke the Word!

4. To show that you have overcome the demons and distractions in the Church.

As God's people plant churches, Satan also assigns demons to distract church members from fulfilling the Great Commission. Every

church has its share of them. These evil spirits cause church divisions and strife—in fact, anything to hinder the purpose of God!As if that was not enough, many dubious people creep in quietly, as the churches grow. They lie, cheat, steal and murmur. If you fall into their company, you will be enticed into wrongdoing. But more importantly, moving with such people can distract your attention from the real purpose of being a Christian.When I was in school, I was despised by some of my mates because I never participated much in athletics. I chose rather to concentrate on my studies (after all, that was why I was there in the first place); but looking at the way some people trained for the athletic events, you would think that was the main reason why they were in school. (Their fans who cheered them on did not make matters any better).When the final exam results came in, I had a distinction, while some of my popular athletic colleagues "bombed" miserably. You see, they missed the point. Instead of concentrating on the primary goal of graduating with good grades, they were distracted into sports, not studies. They were mistaken because they did not set their priorities right.Now, I believe that as Christians we must be steadfast and unmoved, no matter what is happening around us. We must have a vision because without a vision, we will be distracted from time to time. Even as a pastor I do not preoccupy myself with too many "political" meetings. (We are talking about inter-church politics here). I actually determine to stay away from such meetings. This is because I want to remain focused on the vision of winning souls.God's church is the only institution in this world charged with preaching the Gospel, casting out devils, and upholding the truth of God's Word. We should therefore not deviate into party politics, inter-church politics, trading, or secular education.

> *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always [not sometimes, but...] abounding in the work of the Lord…*
>
> *I Corinthians 15:58*

Here God is telling us as individuals, students, workers, and as a church, to remain committed to our objectives, come rain or shine. Have you noticed that the principle of always sticking to one thing, is applied by those who really make a lot of money?Take a successful company like Unilever, a prominent manufacturing company in Ghana (my country). For generations, they have been steadily producing and making money in Ghana, regardless of the numerous political changes. Governments come and go, but (as they say in their Key Soap commercial) "the tradition goes on." And that is one principle that we, as Christians, must learn—to remain focused, to carry on, to be undistracted.However, for some Christians the only tradition that goes on, is their constant distraction from important issues. You really should hear them, as they murmur, complain and gossip:"But why does the pastor drink water halfway through his sermon?""How come I am never allowed to sing a solo in the choir?""Have you heard about that sister? I hear she broke up with her "beloved" in order to marry so- and-so because he's got a US visa."Pssst. Have you seen the pastor's wife's shoes? They must be from Hong Kong." ''I hear that church has a lot of money.'' "Ei, I hear Rev. Sackey is going to Zambia." "What about Pastor Eddy? I hear he..."On and on it goes. Multitudes are perishing, and there is much work to be done. But our attention is diverted to insignificant things.Now, as a member of any church, there are bound to be a whole lot of things which can distract you. But the real issue is to win souls and make disciples for Jesus.

Period.If only we remain steadfast and unmovable by keeping our focus on the Great Commission, we cannot fail to bear fruits.

5. To show that you are an active Christian.

Gynaecologists know for a fact that many childless couples are not sexually active. They just lie by each other like wawa and odum logs in an articulator truck headed for a harbour! Some married women actually want children, but do not want to have sex. They "commit" love only about once a month, and then turn around to complain that they cannot have children.That is how it is with some people. They are Christians alright, but because they are not active, they have no children—no converts, no fruits. Just look around, and you will observe that passive Christians bear no fruits.Do you want to be pregnant and have children? Then you must engage in the activity that will make you pregnant. Do you want to be a fruitful Christian? Then you must engage in the activity that makes you fruitful—witnessing, teaching, helping and getting active in the things of God!Some people say, "But Pastor, I'm the quiet type, I don't want any trouble. I just prefer to mind my own business.""I don't want to preach to my business partner, he'll think I'm 'some way'." And with such excuses we remain totally idle in a vineyard that is ripe for the harvest. So how can we switch from being mere spectators to active participants?

> *...break up your fallow ground...*
>
> *Hosea 10:12*

Fallow ground is that which has been left dormant. Idle! Untouched! Unused! And here the Lord is telling us to break up (cultivate) our fallow ground. That is, to utilize our untapped

potential.Today, there are a lot of genuine, but dormant Christians in the Church. They are gifted with talents which can enable them to perform even better than those who are already engaged in serving the Lord.However, they just sit there, doing nothing, while a few labourers do their best to fulfil the Great Commission. So it appears as if only a few are called, but I am convinced by the Word that many are called. Many men! Many women! Many young people! Every single Christian has a role to play and until you get involved to the point where you are actually bearing fruit, you cannot call yourself an active Christian.As you begin to use your talents and gifts in the service of the Lord, you will find yourself becoming more and more active.Your regular Christian activity will yield results, and your fruits will definitely begin to show.

6. To show that you are mature.

Another reason why you must begin to bear fruits after your own kind, is to show that you are maturing. A Christian without converts is immature. It shows that you are not fully developed. You are not of age. You are unripe.We see the same thing in the physical, where a girl who is say, five or nine years old cannot give birth. This is because she is not yet mature or full-grown. After you are born again your main aim must be to grow, so that you can move from childhood to adulthood; from immaturity to maturity.But there are a whole lot of Christians who remain in the infant stage. By the time they ought to have grown to the point where they also teach others, they still have need for somebody to follow them up and so on.To them, the church service is like some drama on TV. All they remember about the sermon are the jokes.An immature Christian runs around from church to church and from one programme to the other, looking for

excitement. He is looking for the latest thing in town.If a famous evangelist were to start a church across the street, they would immediately drop everything and fly there!Listen, are you looking for something new? Then let me tell you, there is nothing new under the sun. Do not be an airy Christian, blown about by every wind of doctrine. Such people are shallow and childish, tossed to and fro, but a stable Christian knows what he is about, and does not allow anything to sway him. He is stable. This is maturity!The mature tree says, "I will not be moved. I will remain planted here, and focus on growing, till I bear my fruits."Church of God, it is time to grow up! It is time to show by our fruits, that we are mature.

> *When I was a child, I spake...I understood...I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*
>
> *1 Corinthians 13:11*

7. It shows you are abiding.

> *...the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide...He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit:…*
>
> *John 15:4,5*

Jesus is saying here that you and I cannot bear fruit, except we abide in Him; which means to stay, or be planted. It means to be resident, to remain in Christ. To continue in the things of God. You see, you have to abide in the same place for some time in order to become productive in that very place.After all, every tree has to be nurtured over a period of time until it can bear fruits on its own. No

mango tree can bear fruits after just one year.For example, many of the pastors and elders in our church have been abiding here for a long time—abiding Christians who have developed into fruitful leaders. It is only by staying here to be watered and tended, that they have grown to become useful in this very place.But a lot of Christians do not allow themselves to get to this point, because whenever they are planted, they uproot themselves. Today, they are here. Tomorrow, there. One day they are involved in this, the next time it is something else.A tree that is often transplanted will never, ever grow to its full, fruit-bearing potential.Older people are usually more stable in what they are doing. They seem to have a certain "staying anointing". Have you noticed that the members of the older Christian denominations will seldom, if ever, switch to another denomination?I mean, I have met older people who have made it plain to me that though they do understand our "born again" message, they will never change. Of course, that's a negative attitude, but there is a positive aspect of staying in one place, which the younger generation must learn.My initial efforts to reach other medical students were unsuccessful. They just ignored me, but as I continued in the Lord's work, I began to succeed. This is because you get stronger and stronger as you abide. Today, the very doctors and medical students who ignored me are responding to the Gospel.Are you having problems trying to affect your peers? Just keep at it. Continue in the good work. With time they will begin to respond.Dear Christian, God wants you to have a restful spirit. Be stable in church. Be permanent. Abide. Make a quality decision to be planted in a Spirit-filled, Bible-believing church. Then decide to remain rooted until your fruits begin to show.

> *Those that be planted in the house of the LORD...shall*

> *still bring forth fruit in old age…*

Psalm 92:13,14

8. Bear fruit in order to have joy.

> *Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD...Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them…*

Psalm 127:3,5

Here, we understand that he who has many children is a happy man. However, children do not come so easily. In fact, when you consider the many painful and embarrassing things that happen at the labour ward, it makes you wonder, "Why do women want to have more children?"First of all, there is the shame of exposing themselves to total strangers. Then there is the agony of labour itself. The pelvic bones actually move to allow the baby to come out.Sometimes when it becomes necessary to cut the women, their screams confirm the terrible pain they suffer. Really, it is not a small matter. (When I first observed a delivery, I had a renewed respect for women).So why do they do it over and over again?Jesus explained:

> *...she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.*

John 16:21

After the baby is born, there's a joy that women feel, which I cannot possibly explain. Only those who have experienced it can explain it to you, but there's a supreme joy after childbirth; a deep fulfilment after having brought forth someone they can call their very own.It is this joy that makes them go through it again and again.In the

same way, there is a joy you will never experience till you lead others to be born again into the kingdom of God.For someone to be born again and stabilized in Christ under my ministry, is a joy I cannot adequately express.The Bible says, “Happy is the man that hath his quiver full [of such children]” (Psalm 127:5).This is what keeps me going in the ministry, in spite of all the situations I face as a minister.Apart from often being away from my family, I have to endure a lot of ridicule and suspicion. Sometimes people treat you despitefully, because they assume you are jobless with nothing better to do.I endure the shame, because of the unspeakable joy of winning souls for the Lord! You will never know this joy until YOU begin to bear fruit and see it growing.

9. So that you will not be ashamed.

One of the most common verses engraved on many tombstones in our cemeteries is taken from Revelation 14:13....Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth...that they may rest from their labours...Now notice: It did not say, “Blessed are those in the choir or them that die in the church.” Friends, it is a matter of being in the Lord, not just in the church!But the text ends with a very important revelation:

> *...and their works do follow them.*
>
> *Revelation 14:13*

Look, when you die you cannot take anything along with you. No, not your car, your money, or even your clothes. After death the only thing which can follow you are your works; that is, the fruits you have borne in your Christian life.These are the disciples you have

established in the Lord, your Christian children.As I pointed out earlier on, it is considered a great shame to be childless in our society. Now, concerning spiritual children, we learn that:

> *Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them [children]: they shall not be ashamed...*
>
> *Psalm 127:5*

Very soon you are going to stand before the judgement seat of Christ. Are you going to stand there, empty-handed and ashamed?Or will you bear your fruits now, so that your works can follow you? Think about it.

10. To preserve your own kind in the church.

In the seventh chapter of Genesis, God commanded Noah to enter the ark with his wife, his three sons, and their wives. In addition, he was to take with him male and female counterparts of every kind of beast.Why was God so interested in preserving a sample of every kind of animal in the ark?It was to keep life going on the earth after the flood. Take a look at verse three:Of fowls also of the air by seven, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of the earth.The Helen Spurrel Translation of The Old Testament puts it this way:

> *...to preserve the species...*
>
> *Genesis 7:3*

By so doing, God has ensured the survival of each type of animal to this day, because He knew that Noah could never give birth to any of the other animals. He could only reproduce his own kind—human beings.This same principle applies spiritually. Bearing fruit after your

own kind will ensure that your particular “species” continues to exist in the church.When the Lighthouse Chapel was founded, about half of the small congregation was made up of student nurses. This ratio was sustained for some years.However, at a point, the student nurses slacked in their outreach towards their own kind. Therefore, as they continued to graduate and to be transferred outside the city, their representation in the congregation diminished.Today, you will not find so many nurses in our church—because they failed to preserve their own kind.For this same reason, many churches which used to be the cutting edge of Christianity are nowhere to be found today. How sad! You see, because I am bearing fruit after my own kind, there are many medical students and doctors in our church.There are several doctor-pastors in the ministry with me now. Some of them are even in full-time ministry. I have preserved my own kind!Now YOU too can begin to make converts of people who are just like you. This is your contribution to the growth and continuity of the church.Dear friend, just think about the increase we would have, if only the church of God would apply God’s prescribed method: Individual Christians bearing fruit after their own kind.As we all begin to operate in this way, we will surely experience a higher success rate in our personal evangelism, resulting in growth on all sides for the Body of Christ.Dear friend, this is your time to bear fruit AFTER YOUR OWN KIND.